



HUMBLE LIKE JESUS

Part 8 of 1st Corinthians

Pastor Mark Driscoll | 1 Corinthians 3:16-22 | February 26, 2006

A brush of idealism paints the 1st-century church as a nostalgic example of community and perfection. The congregation in Corinth, however, was anything but ideal. Rather than sharing their possessions, the Corinthians would sue each other to get more stuff. Rather than eating meals together, the Corinthians would cut in line during communion to get drunk off the wine. And rather than communal singing, the Corinthians had communal sex. I'm A.J. Hamilton with Mars Hill Church in Seattle. In this sermon series, Pastor Mark Driscoll teaches on the letter known as 1 Corinthians, which the Apostle Paul wrote to untangle the many moral and theological knots the Corinthian church created.

In addressing their sin, Paul provides some of the richest theological sections of the entire New Testament. After listening to the following sermon, e-mail any questions or comments to feedback@marshillchurch.org. To automatically receive Mars Hill audio programming, subscribe to our podcast available at marshillchurch.org. And now, here's Pastor Mark with "Humble Like Jesus", the eighth sermon in a series, "Christians Gone Wild: 1 Corinthians."

So I will go ahead and pray, and we'll get right into 1 Corinthians 3.

Father God – as always – thank you for your goodness and your faithfulness to us individually and corporately. Thank you for bringing Mars Hill Church into existence. Thank you for securing our salvation through the death of your Son and his resurrection. And God, we know that this church is important to you. May it be also important to us. May we share your heart for this church. May we give our lives to the same thing that Jesus gave his life to – that being the church. And so as we study today we ask the Holy Spirit to come and inform us and instruct us and to transform us so that we might have the mind of Jesus and the heart of Jesus that we might live the life of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

As we get into it, we'll start by me telling you some stories about church. The point of 1 Corinthians is really to enlarge all of our hearts for the church – this church. And we started Mars Hill about nine years ago as a Bible study – it'll actually be ten years old this October – and we met only in the evenings for the first four plus years of the church, because we couldn't find a place to meet in the morning. So I got in the habit of visiting lots of churches on Sunday mornings, since it was free time for me. And I went to some great churches, and I learned some things about how we could do some things better, and things to consider very practically about how to run a church.

Other churches that I visited were just very sad, very unfortunate circumstances that they found themselves in. And it was interesting to see the different kinds of churches. And I remember going to one very large church – beautiful building. It was obvious at some point there were a lot of people who had given a ton of money, and they had really built a significant church building. And when I got there, there was less than a hundred people. No one that I saw was under the age of maybe 60. There were no future hope generations for the church, and the church was in obvious steep decline. And I asked one of the leaders, I said, "Well, what happened?"

And they said, "Well, over the years we've made some changes in our beliefs." And as I pushed and pushed and pushed, the truth was they'd stopped really talking about Jesus. They'd stopped really talking about sin. They stopped really using the Bible. And they just sort of drifted more toward a general spirituality and far away from Jesus. And so the church was in a real steady decline, which was unfortunate. Probably the saddest church I visited was a very small church that on paper had good doctrine. And I went there and there was maybe six or seven older women, who were all widows, and that was it. That was the whole church.

There wasn't one child in the church. There wasn't a married couple. I mean it was just a handful of older widows, and what had happened was the church had gotten off to a pretty good start, and it had many good years of ministry. And then two whole generations disappeared from the church, and all that was left was some of the founders' widows, who didn't leave the church because they felt loyal to the legacy of their husbands. And I showed up there, and it was weird going to church, because I walked in, there's like eight of us. And I'm the only guy; I'm the only person under 70.

I got a lot of cookies and nice conversations with some very sweet older women. It was like picking up instant grandma love all over the place. And I asked them, I said, "Well, what happened here?" and they said, "Well, you know, some bad legalism got in. Bad doctrine not based on Bible," a few things. And as I was looking through the church – because I'm real nosy – I kind of drifted off on my own, and I'm looking through the Sunday school rooms and checking everything out. And I found this really interesting picture. It kind of has haunted me, and I've kept it since – they let me keep it. I didn't steal it.

But it was a picture where it was taken maybe in the '40s or '50s, and it was in front of the church, and it was black and white, and it was like church photo day. And so in the picture were maybe 100 adults and over 100 little kids were in the picture. And they're all dressed up, you know, in 1940s and

'50s garb. And I thought, "Where did all those kids go?" Man, there was over 100 kids in this little church – little people that should've grown up and still been in the church. And so I asked around, and I could get a straight answer what happened to all of those kids.

And I've heard over the years that maybe there was someone who was sexually abusing children in the church, and they didn't discipline that person, so eventually all the families and the children left. I've not been able to confirm that. Others said it was just bad doctrine – that the church got real narrow and mean. I don't know what happened; I don't know what happened. But it was interesting for me as I was starting Mars Hill looking at churches that had been around for a long time and trying to figure out what are the mistakes that they made that inevitably caused the collapse or downfall of the church?

And we're at a place right now as a church – we're growing fast and money's rolling in, and people are rolling in, and people are getting married and making babies. And you look around, you say, "It looks like we got a future." The elderly people here are 27 – we got a future. But the question is: what would it take for Mars Hill to get off-track? What would it take for us to be a church that went into decline? And I could tell you this: that churches, they quickly go into decline. That momentum is hard to build, and it's easy to lose; and once lost, it's hard to build again. And that's the truth.

And Paul is dealing with this same issue in the book of Corinth. It was a young, hip, cool, urban church, off to a fast start. Everybody's cool. They think they got a future. People are getting married, making babies, sure this thing's gonna roll forever. And Paul is essentially telling his church: "Don't assume that." You can get into some patterns of thinking and acting, theological and moral compromise that early on don't seem like a big deal. But then they become a little more preeminent, and then they become a little more widespread. Next thing you know, the church has really lost its way and things are going downhill quickly.

And I'll tell you three things up front about the church that I think Paul is trying to emphasize throughout the book. One is that the church of Jesus Christ comes at a great cost. You don't get a church without a lot of blood, sweat, tears. It cost Jesus everything. He laid down his life and died to purchase us as his possession to be the church. It cost Jesus everything. And it cost the people in the church a great deal to build a church. Where Mars Hill is at right now, millions of dollars have been spent.

I don't know how many tens of thousands of hours of service has been given by the people in this church. It cost a great deal. There's other places you could spend your time and your money. Other places you could meet people, bring your family, friends, raise your kids. There's other places you could be. A church like Mars Hill comes into existence, sustains itself, and grows, because a major sacrifice has been made by Jesus and Jesus' people. So churches come at a high cost.

But secondly, churches are constantly under attack – constantly under attack to be shut down, to be compromised, to get off-message, to get off-mission, to lose their way. It happens in two ways: it happens morally and doctrinally. Paul was fighting some big doctrinal battles in Corinth. A lot of people had a low view of the Bible, and they were ignoring whole passages of Scripture. Some of them had a low view of Jesus, and they didn't think he was cool enough for them – though they claimed to be Christians. Some people didn't really want to talk about sin. They didn't really believe in sin. They didn't think they were sinners. They thought they were basically good people.

Other people in the church were confused over the resurrection of Jesus. Some people didn't really like the doctrine of hell. All the same stuff we deal with today. It's interesting that some 2,000 years later the same issues that Jesus' church in Corinth was wrestling through is the same issues that Jesus' church everywhere is wrestling through. I mean, do we really need to love Jesus? Do we really need to believe the Bible? Do we really need to acknowledge that we're sinners? Do we really need to believe that Jesus died on a cross to take away our sin? Will we really go to hell if we don't have a life with Jesus? Yep – these are all the issues on the table.

And morally, this church had gotten sidetracked too. And most of their confusion – some of it was alcohol abuse, substance abuse. Some of it was greed and financial abuse – perennially popular diversions. The real issue there, though, was gender. We'll get to it in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. The women were all feminists. The dudes were all effeminate. I know you've never seen this in Seattle – it's kind of an old problem. It's been dealt with since then. But they had that problem, and I know none of you do.

Anyways, we'll deal with that a little further in Corinthians. And what happens is, out of that there's gender confusion – they don't know that God made them male and female – that leads to sexual sin. So you have people that are having sex before they're married, fornicating. You have people committing homosexuality. You have people committing adultery outside of their marriage. All the same issues that we deal with as a church – young, hip, cool, up-and-coming urban churches deal with the same sets of issues. It doesn't matter if it was 2,000 years ago or today.

So the first thing is the church comes at a great cost. Two, the church is constantly under attack, morally and theologically to compromise, lower its standards, ignore certain sections of Scripture. And thirdly – and this is the one that may shock you – the greatest threat to the church is usually from within the church. Most of the time you hear pastors talk about, "And out there in the world are all the homosexuals, and all the abortion doctors, and all the leftists, and the liberals, and the terrorists, and the" – you know. And there are people outside of the church that are on all those teams.

But the greatest threat to the church is usually not outside of the church; it's usually inside of the church. And we can't do good cop / bad cop where we say, "Well, all the good guys are in here, and all the bad guys are out there. And as long as us good guys hold the line against the bad guys, everything will be fine." The truth is the bad guys are usually on the team in the church – that's the problem. If you're here today and you're not a Christian, I don't think you're the greatest threat to the future of Mars Hill if you're not a Christian.

If you are here and you say you're a Christian, but you live a hypocritical lifestyle, or you say you're a Christian and you're really not, and you think you're very spiritual and you feel like telling everybody else what to do, and you don't know what you're talking about, but you want to be at Mars Hill,

you're a real problem. If you're here visiting and you think we're all nuts, you're probably right, and you're not a real problem, okay? I don't believe that our greatest threat for our viability and future as a church is gonna be from the outside – it's gonna be from the inside.

This is exactly what happened to Jesus as he's starting his church. He grabs his core group – his 12 disciples – and where's Judas? On the team, in the group, in the middle – that's the problem. So he's stealing money, betrays Jesus, participates in his murder. Paul says to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, "Men will arise from your own number, distort the truth, and lead many astray." Men will arise from your own number, distort the truth, and lead people astray. How do people get led astray? By people in the church rising up, teaching false doctrine, living false morality, and then encouraging others to follow them, which they do.

You know, it's sad, because the church in America is not a great place. Most churches are plateaued or declining. 80 percent of all churches are plateaued or declining. New people aren't coming, new Christians aren't meeting Jesus, and new children aren't being born. The average church says it's between 70 and 80 people, and according to the stats, they're lying – which is a whole 'nother sin, right? Not only are we not leading people to Jesus, we're lying about it. They say that church over-reporting is as high as 50 percent. So the average church has 40, 50, 60 people.

That means they're teetering on the brink of existence, because it's hard to pay the bills, maintain a building, even pay a part-time pastor's salary. At that point, just survival on a very practical level becomes very hard. 3 ½ thousand churches die and close every year in America – 3 ½ thousand churches die and close every year in America. All that to say that most churches aren't doing well, some don't make it at all, and that most of the problems for the church come from within the church – bad doctrine and bad moral examples and bad moral teaching.

So people are sinning with their actions and people are sinning with their thoughts, and the church of Jesus Christ in America is not doing as well as we would hope, especially in the Seattle area. How many of you have driven around and seen lots of churches, but you don't see anybody coming in or out of them? You don't see anything going on. There's not a lot of action. Some of you drive into this church, and you drive by churches in your neighborhood that no one's going to, and you don't even know what's going on there.

The question is: does that bother you? Does that trouble you? I mean, it does trouble me. I am a guy who's given his life to the church. I love the church of Jesus Christ. I write books for pastors and churches. I travel, do consulting, speaking, writing – anything I can do to try to help churches, because I love the church. And it breaks my heart when I'm driving down a street and I see a church, and the weeds are growing up, and the reader-board hasn't been changed in a long time. And the doors are always locked every time I drive by, and nobody's coming or going.

And I wonder, "Is anything happening there, and will they be there in a few years? Or will this be just another piece of commercial real estate that they put another condo on, or a Jiffy-Lube, or will this be the place that they're still talking about Jesus?" Do you have a heart for the church? I'm such a freak. I'll drive around the city, and I know all the struggling churches, and I park in front of them frequently and pray for them. Occasionally I break into them. True story – I'll pull all the doors and stuff looking for a door they forgot, and then I'll let myself in. And I'll sit in the church and pray for them.

I'll just sit in the church and pray, and say, "God, please – anything! Help!" and I pray for the churches. And some of you say, "Shouldn't we just give up on certain churches?" Well, some Jesus will shut down; that's to be sure. But Paul's writing to the Corinthian church, which is a jacked up, messed up – it's just a bad church. But God still is working on that church. So even if it's bad churches, messed up churches, sideways churches, Jesus can and should shut many of them down. But it doesn't mean that there's no hope for all of them.

The question is: well, do you have a heart for the church? See, God has a heart for the church. Paul, who's their pastor, has a heart for the Corinthian church. I, as your pastor, have a total heart for this church. But it's not just enough that God and the church leaders would have a heart for the church. The people in the church need to have a heart for their church. Otherwise, what will happen is you will be the beginning point of a cancer that spreads through the church body. See, some of you don't know that.

You come in and say, "What does it matter what I believe?" It does matter, because as you make friends, they listen to you. If you get some crazy idea, then they get some crazy idea, next thing you know it's an epidemic and we all get cancer, and eventually the church body dies. One gal walks in, says, "What does it matter if I'm sleeping with my boyfriend and say I'm a Christian?" Well, that means all your girlfriends will think that's a good idea. Next thing you know, we've got an epidemic, and it's a cancer in the middle of the church that just compromises and kills the whole church.

You say, "Well, we can't kill Mars Hill. It's going so good." It doesn't take much to get off-track, and it doesn't take much to get off-mission. It just doesn't. And so each of us needs to have a desire for Jesus and for holiness, because we are the most likely candidates to introduce a virus into the church that spreads, infects others, grows, causes the church to be sick, eventually start to decline, eventually to die. First question – I'm gonna ask you three – why does it matter that we care if churches are struggling, suffering, under attack, and dying?

Why should we care? I mean ultimately – why should our hearts be concerned, particularly for our own church? Paul answers that beginning in verse 16. "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple" – here he's not speaking of the individual body. He will do that in 1 Corinthians 6; I think it's around verse 19. Here he's talking about the corporate, collective church – "and that God's Spirit" – the Holy Spirit – "lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple."

Here's why he says it matters: if there is an attack on the church – compromise doctrinally, compromise morally – it's an attack on God. Because the church belongs to God; and the church is a sacred place. And he compares the church to the Old Testament temple. Now, in the Old Testament they had the tabernacle, which was the precursor to the temple. Then they built the Temple. Then later on they rebuilt a second Temple. The priests would minister in the Temple. Sacrifices would be given in the Temple. Sins would be confessed in the Temple.

Worship would be conducted at the Temple. Tithes and offerings would be brought to the Temple. Feasts, festivals, celebrations would be conducted at the Temple. So much of the life of the Old Testament is about the Temple. And in the center of the Temple was the Holy of Holies, where the Presence of God dwelt on the earth. It was God's house, God's home, sacred, special place. You come there to worship God, do business with God. It's a serious and holy thing.

And what he says is the Temple doesn't exist anymore – it was actually destroyed in 70 A.D. – because Jesus does want us going to the Temple. He wants us going to him in the church. And now the equivalent of the Old Testament Temple is the church. That the church is special, the church is sacred, the church is holy. Now, I want you to get this. Now, how many of you coming here thought, "I'm going to Mars Hill. It's a sacred, special place." And I'm not talking just about the building, because our building, quite frankly, is not that sacred. It was built 20 years ago by a Mormon guy as a hardware store in God's great irony, right?

So our boss is a carpenter, and a Mormon guy built us a hardware store for Jesus. So I think that's funny. But so the building isn't that big a – we're not talking church building, because Mars Hill has met all over the place. We've met – I'm trying to think – we've met up by the zoo, Laurelhurst, downtown, U District – two places in the U District, another place in Ballard, now we're up in Shoreline, we're here – we're everywhere. We keep moving. So it's not the building, but it's the people who live their life together, that love Jesus, that are filled with the Holy Spirit, that confess their sins to Jesus, that sing out to him in worship.

That give their tithes and offerings, that break bread together in their homes, that love one another, that live their lives together as God's family. That's our community. It's all the relationships, and the people loving and serving together. That's what it is to be the church, not just a place, but a people. And what he says is that when God's people are together, and when God's people are knit together in community, that that's a special, sacred place. That of all the places on earth Jesus could be he has chosen to be here with us.

Some of you say, "Well, why is the church such a big deal? I mean, there's cooler coffee shops where you can get better service and refreshments. And if you want a good lecture there's universities everywhere. And if you want a good band there's concert venues. What do you need the church for? There's community service organizations to help the poor, and the disadvantaged, and the single mother, and the homeless." And we say yeah, all those things exist, and we're not against any of them. We say praise God for all of them. But what makes the church distinct, unique, special?

He says that the church is the Temple of God, the house of God, where God has decided that he will live with his people. I tell you what makes Mars Hill special – one thing. Jesus is here. Do you truly believe that – that Jesus Christ is with us? I mean it's the most humbling truth. Of all the places Jesus could be, Jesus has chosen to be with us. Not just us, but all the churches that love Jesus – big and small, regardless of denomination or affiliation. If they're gathered together today to worship Jesus, to sing to him, to confess sin to him, to open the Scriptures and learn about him, Jesus is there.

Jesus wants to be with his people. So the question is why should we care when there's an attack on the church, and there is constant attack on the church from within. Christians are notorious at attacking and complaining. That's like the primary spiritual gift for most Christians. Oh, we all have the gift of complaining – and don't send me an e-mail, because you'll just prove my point. Christians love to complain about their church. "I didn't like this, and I didn't like that, and I don't like this and that, and" – and I get that, right? And some people write whole books on why Christianity is terrible.

And people who say they're Christian leaders take huge pot shots at the whole church. And I understand that the church is filled with sin and sinners, and it has problems. The Corinthian church has lots of problems. Paul is dealing with them. But at the end of the day, you've got to understand that the church is a sacred, holy, and special thing that was a people purchased by Jesus. And just throwing rocks is not the answer. Complaining, you know, going off on your blog, that's not the answer.

The answer ultimately is to be part of the church and to work for the betterment of the church. To not sit in the church and be a cancer that complains, but to be in the church, filled with the Holy Spirit, serving, giving, loving, trying to help the church be a better church. And that's where Paul is going with his people, right? They complain about all kinds of things, but they're not really motivated to do a whole lot because they don't really have a deep love for their church.

You say, "Well, I know some bad churches." I know some bad churches too, and Corinthian church is one of those churches that is a bad church, but God still loves them, and he says that Jesus is still there, so there's the hope. Jesus has decided to be with us – what a wonderful gift that is! And I know some of you are saying, "Well, I want to be a Christian because I want to get rich, or I want to be famous. I want to get married. I want to make babies. I want to feel better. I want to get healthy." I tell you what – the best gift God has given us is God. That's what he's telling the church.

All you guys are smart, and cool, and successful, and educated. I got something better for you – God. God would like to be with you. God would like to be in your midst, and God would like to dwell among your community. Not just all the goodies that God brings, but the goodness that God is. God is here. That's the most wonderful news I've ever heard. I love going to the coffee shop, and I love going to the bookstore, and I love going to the concert venue. And I'm not saying that God is not in those places. But in some distinct, unique way, he's here with his people that he's not everywhere else.

That's what Paul's saying. So why should it matter that people attack the church, complain about the church, throw rocks at the church. You know, internally claim to be Christians and teach bizarre doctrine, or encourage aberrant morality – because an attack on God's house is an attack on God. In the same way, if you came home after church today and somebody was throwing rocks through the window and spray-painting the side and driving an SUV across the lawn, you would take that personally. You would say, "That's just not an attack on my house; that's an attack on me."

Likewise, an attack on the church, God's people, is an attack on God. It's a disrespect of God. So why should we care – because the church is sacred

and special. Second question, then – who is most likely to rise up from within a church, be the emanating point of the cancer that then contributes to the sickness of the whole body? Who is most likely to jack the whole thing up? I told you last week it was me. This week I'll tell you it's you, me, and all of us together combined, beginning in verse 16 – verse 18, rather.

“Do not deceive yourselves.” Christians can become self-deceived, right? You ever watch American Idol? Perennial human problem, self-deception – right? “If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age,” right? You're super-smart, super-cool, super-fly – “he should become a ‘fool’ so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight.” God looks down at the world and says, “They're not that smart. Now, they think they are – but they're not.” “As it is written” – he quotes Job 5:13 – “He catches the wise in their craftiness.”

What he says is if you're one of these sneaky, super-smart, smarter than everybody, always manipulating situations to get your way kind of person, God takes special delight in jacking with you. That's what he says. And again, verse 20, he quotes Psalm 94:11 – “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.” He knows what you're thinking, and if you think you're super-smart – smarter than he is – you're wrong. So who is most likely to destroy a church? Some of you say, “Why we gotta talk about this? Things are going good.” You talk about these things when things are going good. When they're going bad, it's too late.

Get your check-up before the limb falls off, right? Preventative maintenance is good. before everything has come off-track. And this is why I'm concerned: we are now a church with seven services in two locations. If God continues to provide, we will be a church, I believe, in the fall, of eight or nine services in three or four locations. We will continue to distribute and spread. And the question is will we spread the love of Jesus or some sort of cancer that infects various congregations under the rubric of Mars Hill?

What people are most likely to rise up from within the church and spread cancer – bad doctrine, bad morality, all kinds of problems? He says that people that do that tend to be intelligent – they're not dumb. They tend to be confident. They feel that they know exactly what they're talking about, and they think they're very spiritual and very mature and very Godly. And they're very articulate. They can articulate, answer questions, rebut those who disagree. And you say, “What's wrong with being intelligent, confident, and articulate?” Nothing, if you're right. If you're wrong, that's a real problem. If you're confident, articulate, and intelligent, and nuts, you could be a real problem.

And what he's saying is that some people who come into the church, they think they're very spiritual, but they're self-deceived. They're very intelligent, so they're able to defend themselves, and people get confused. And they're very articulate – it's hard to win an argument with them. Subsequently, they tend to push a lot of people around, have more influence than they should, and go deeper into the heart of the church structure than they should have ever been permitted to. And the problem with them is this: they are deceived. Deceived – this is Satanic. Satan is called the deceiver; he's self-deceived.

You say, “Why does Satan keep fighting God, declaring war on God?” Well, he's deceived. He thinks God's wrong, and he's right. He thinks God's bad, and he's good. He thinks God's weak, and he's strong. He thinks he's gonna win. Satan is deceived – self-deceived, and now he's the deceiver and other people are deceived – and they're self-deceived. They tell themselves lies, and they believe them. And then they convince themselves, so they become convincing as they articulate those lies to others.

This is exactly – and this is what happens in the church. People who say they're Christians, maybe they are or not – God knows their heart. Okay, so we all have the potential of being the beginning place of division in the church, and problems in the church; the question is whether or not we will be self-deceived. Some of you are saying, “Well, what does this look like?” Well, I'm glad you asked. Now I'll give you some examples. You're welcome.

Okay, I'll give you some examples, okay? We'll do this. “Well, you know, I think Jesus was a good teacher, but I'm not sure that he really was God. I mean, that's a big claim, and I'm not sure he even said he was God. Maybe that was just things that his followers believed many years after he existed” – deceived. “Well, I'm not sure we need the Bible. That's a primitive book, and we've evolved now, and we're much smarter than they were back in Bible times” – deceived. “Well, I'm a woman, and this is my body, and I get to do whatever I want with my body, including having sex with my boyfriend and aborting our child, because this body is mine” – deceived.

“Well, we can have sex because at least we are in a committed relationship, and we love each other, and we're married in our hearts” – deceived. “Well, it's okay if I get a divorce, because I'm not as happy as I want to be, and God's whole purpose for me is to be happy. And God just wants me to be happy” – deceived. “Well, I know that I shouldn't be looking at porno, but my wife's kind of a nag, and I'm sick of her, and it's better than committing adultery. So it's not as bad, and I'm actually saving the marriage” – deceived. “I don't need to obey my parents. I'm my own person. I'm an adult. I get to make my own decisions and do whatever I want to do” – deceived.

“I don't think anybody's really gonna go to hell. I don't think there is a hell. I think God's not mean like that. God's not judgmental like that. God's a lot lighter than that. He's not so uptight” – deceived. “I think all religions basically teach the same thing” – deceived. “I think all religions basically worship the same God and just have different names” – deceived. “I believe the Bible's pretty good, but I believe there's a whole bunch of books. And all the books have a lot to say, and all the books are equal. And we should just read all the books, and no book should have authority over any other book” – deceived.

“I think it's okay to be homosexual. I mean, if you're born that way then you need to be true to yourself” – deceived. “I think it's okay if you get drunk, because after all, as long as you don't hurt somebody, it really doesn't matter what you do. That's why drugs and alcohol don't matter” – deceived. Deceived. It's everywhere, isn't it? It's epidemic. The saddest thing is that it's epidemic in the church, by people who say, “I'm a Christian, and I've just created a new form of Christianity that allows me to not repent of any sin or believe anything that I don't already believe.”

Paul says to his people, “This church could go away in an instant. If a couple of you decide to be self-deceived, your friends are gonna listen to you.

Some of their friends are gonna listen to them. And next thing you know, we got an epidemic on our hands.” Next thing you know, what we believe and what we do is completely wrong, and it’s the articulate, intelligent, confident people who think that they are the most mature, that are confusing everyone else. How many of you have been in this kind of church or ministry? That’s exactly what happens – self-deception.

Here’s a few of my favorites: “I’m a good person” – deceived. Down deep, you really are a good person. You just do all these things for some reason connected to your family; you’re a victim. Down deep, you’re really a good person. Down in your heart, you’re a good person” – deceived. “You know, what you do is not your fault. You’re a product of your environment, your DNA, your genetics – you can’t change. You need to love yourself. You need to accept yourself” – deceived. It’s epidemic.

Paul looks at his church and says, “Friends, we can’t go there. We can’t be like that. Otherwise, we won’t be the church any more. We will just be taking the thoughts and behaviors of people who don’t know God, baptizing them in spiritual language, justifying ourselves. And the Holy Spirit does not bless such people, and Jesus Christ doesn’t want to dwell with such people.” See, some of you come in here today, and you don’t think that you’re a real threat or danger – that is part of the deception. One smart, attractive, winsome, educated, selfless couple that’s dating and having sex all of a sudden convinces other couples that it’s an acceptable alternative lifestyle. Next thing you know – cancer.

One woman who knows her Bible well just gets bitter against her husband, hits the “eject” button, and says, “I’m gonna go make myself happy.” All of her friends are married to the same kind of guy, driving them nuts too, and next thing you know, it’s an epidemic. You say, “Well, this doesn’t matter because I’m an individual” – deceived. Deceived. So the question becomes if the church matters to God, and it’s holy and sacred, and if it’s constantly under attack from within by people that are deceived and claim to be Christians – whether or not they are is up to God to decide – that leads to the third question, and my final point.

Which is how in the world does a church like Mars Hill defend, protect itself from this kind of deception coming in, leading to the destruction of the church, getting completely off-track, and us becoming yet another church that had a great start and a tragic end?

Paul addresses that question in verse 21. “So then, no more boasting about men!” You got your favorite author; you got your favorite write, speaker, philosopher – ducky for you! “All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas” – that’s Peter; three different Christian leaders. “Or the world” – see, God rules over the world and the church. “Life or death” – God rules over life and death. “The present or the future” – today or tomorrow; God’s in charge of all of this – “are all yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.” Here’s what he says: one of the ways that you and I, as we mature as a church, can help to defend ourselves against becoming self-deceived is allowing ourselves to be humble enough to constantly learn from all of the people who love Jesus and believe the Bible.

We’re not saying that you need to just have a broad-minded tolerance, but you need to have a broad-minded Biblical tolerance that says, “If you believe the Bible and love Jesus, and you’re in another church, denomination, tradition, I may not agree with you on everything, but I definitely have things I can definitely learn from you.” What that means is this: don’t just read one author, okay? Read broadly. Don’t just read all the books from one publisher because usually a publisher represents one mindset or theology; read a little broader than that. Don’t just listen to one teacher – that includes me. Don’t just follow teachers that all graduated from the same seminary.

Don’t just believe everything that comes from the same denomination, or network, or tradition. Don’t just read books from the same period of history – there are people that love Jesus that have already died that have a lot to teach us too. Don’t just learn from one nation. Today some of the best missionaries are coming out of Korea, some of the fastest-growing churches are in China, and some of the strongest leaders are in Africa. So what he’s saying is don’t just restrict yourself in your ability to learn and grow by being so narrow. He’s saying don’t open it up to where you believe every crazy idea – you gotta be discerning.

But if there are Bible-believing, Jesus-loving people, even if you don’t agree with them on everything, there’s certainly something that they could teach you and you could learn from. I’ll give you some examples. If you wanna learn about worship, where do you go? Well, to the charismatics! They raise their hands, they cry, they shout – they’re nothing like us. They’re great, right? They got a lot to teach us. I mean, they actually look like Jesus is still alive. It’s wonderful – I love those people! You say, “What, I gotta raise my hands?” Yeah, there’s verses on it. It’s amazing how the Bible guys are always like, “Don’t raise your hands. This is a Bible church.” Well, the Bible says to raise them.

So go to the charismatics, because they take all the verses literally, including the ones about getting excited. You want to learn about holiness, you go to a Methodist or Nazarene church. You want to learn how important church history is, go to an Anglican or a Lutheran or a Catholic church. You want to learn about theology – go to a Presbyterian church, right? They got big books with big words, and they read a lot, and no pictures in their books.

They’re thinking. You want to learn about – oh, what do you want to learn? About baptism – where do you go? Baptists. They just tell you, man – “We know this. We got this one down,” and talk about baptism, right?

So the question is whether there’s nothing – yeah, there’s lots we can learn from all of God’s children. What does that mean at Mars Hill? People come to Mars Hill and say, “What denomination are you?” I don’t know. Some say, “Are you independent?” I don’t like independent because independent sounds like we’re all by ourselves, and we won’t play with any other kids, right? No, we’re not that kid. We’re not independent. I like to say we’re interdenominational, right, because I’ve got good friends that are in the Assemblies of God. Good friends that are in the Calvary Chapel movement.

And good friends that are in the Vineyard. Good friends that are Lutheran. Good friends that are Presbyterians. Good friends that are in the Christian Reformed Church. There’s 300 kinds of Baptists; we know a good chunk of them. There’s every kind of Baptist, like left-handed Vietnamese Baptists, right-handed Cambodian Baptists. Oh, it’s okay. There’s 300 kinds of Baptists, and we work with a lot of Baptists. And the question is, “Well, which one’s right?” And the issue is, “You know what, these are all friends that all have strengths and weaknesses. And we learn from the strengths, and

together hopefully we complement one another's weaknesses."

That's the hope in the body of Christ. It's like looking at a family with 12 kids saying, "Well, which one's the good one?" "See, well, we love them all, and they each have different personalities, and each one has something to contribute to the family, and we learn things from each person that's in the family" – same thing with the family of God; same with the family of God. And Paul is saying that what a church has done, they've just picked one teacher, and that's all they're gonna listen to. They're just gonna read his books, listen to his messages, think his ideas. And the result of that will be an extremism that's never checked.

If that person should get off-track, there is no corrective measures. It's a real danger. In the history of Mars Hill, the guys that have given me the hardest theological time, been the most potentially divisive – what I love to do is sit down with those guys and say, "When you meet with me, bring me a list of all the books on your shelf." Okay? One guy I met with, two publishers. Every book in his library, two publishers, and the two publishers believe the exact same thing. I said, "You need to think and read more about it." "I don't have to." "No, you need to." "Well, I don't want to be open-minded crazy."

I said, "Don't be crazy. I'm just saying there are some Christians that don't write for that publisher, right – hypothetically. Maybe they have something that would be helpful to help you learn a little more about Jesus, a little more about the Bible." That's what Paul is saying; "this is all yours." That's what he means by that. They say, "We love Apollos. We love Peter. We love Paul." Paul says, "You know what, we all serve the church. We all write. We all speak. And all of our resources, plus all the other Godly leaders, all of their resources are here at your disposal."

Don't be the person who says, "I eat one thing for breakfast every day for the rest of my life," you know? Open the palate a little bit; open the menu. See what else God has for you. We don't want to become too narrow. We don't want to become too broad. Paul's trying to get his church to strike that wise balance, where you listen and learn, but you don't believe everything you hear. That's how we stay out of trouble and extremism. He goes on further to say that the church ultimately is gonna be all right, because God rules over the church and the world, the present and the future. God rules over life and death. God knows what's going on. God has things under control. There is no need to be freaking out. And what he's saying, though, ultimately, is we need to be like Jesus. That's where he ends. 23: "You are of Christ," you belong to Jesus, "and Christ is of God." Jesus Christ is God, who belongs to God the Father. And what he's saying is now you need to look to Jesus for your example of what it means to be a faithful Christian. You're looking in all the wrong places.

Books and leaders and teachers are all great, but you guys aren't primarily focused on Jesus. And if you want to know how to protect your church, live a decent life, and honor God, the most important thing: look to Jesus. And what he tells us here is that Jesus Christ is of God. He's talking about that although Jesus was and is God, he humbled himself, became a human being, came into history, and was very humble. Willing to obey God the Father, submit to God the Father – follow God the Father that we should follow in Jesus' example. What he's saying is this: Christianity is not about innovation, it's about faithfulness. It's not about coming up with a whole bunch of new ideas; it's about being faithful to the eternal truth.

That's what it's about. And he says, "Look at Jesus." Jesus was humble, not proud. How did people respond to Jesus? Many thought he was a fool. "Oh, you think you're God. You think you're without sin. You think you have enlightenment. You think you have something to teach us. You're a fool." Subsequently, they hated him, and some put him to death. Now, gloriously, in God's tragic irony, Jesus Christ died in our place for our sins so that great horror of Jesus' murder was the means by which God purchased the church and attained our salvation. But it was still an evil.

And let me ask you this: do you really want to be a Christian like Jesus? Do you want to be humble? Do you want to be a fool? And do you want people to dislike you? That's what he's asking. Because at the end of the day, it really comes down to one of two choices: you want everybody to like you, and you will alter and change your morality and your theology to accommodate and compromise, so that nobody thinks you're a fool, a simpleton, an idiot. Or you will love Jesus, humbly hold to your convictions – not be a jerk about it. Humbly hold to your convictions and say, "You know what, Jesus' opinion of me matters more than yours."

"And at the end of the day, if you're gonna make me choose between you and Jesus, and whose approval I am seeking my approval must be sought in Jesus Christ alone." So let me ask you this, right now: how are you doing? How many of you are saying, "You know what, I'm a fool. I'm a fool for Jesus. I'm a Bible-believing, Jesus-freak, old-school nut job, and I'm cool with that." Because really it comes down to this: do you want everybody to say you are cool, or do you want Jesus to say, "You have done a good job; I'm proud of you?" That's really the bottom line.

Okay, now I get this, right? I'm a pastor, and even dealing with Christians you gotta – I gotta take you to a meeting sometime, with the gay pastors, and the women pastors, and the pastors who pray to Jesus and Buddha and Mohammed and Krishna and the tree. It's just a weird city – I get that, right? I walk in, "Hi, I'm Mark." "Oh, hm." "How are you guys doing?" "Good. How are you?" "Good. My wife just had a kid." "Oh, you breed?" "Yeah, we breed – it's fun. I love to breed. We have five kids." "Five kids – don't you know the world's full?" "Yeah. It's full of people I don't like. I'm trying to put some people I like on the planet. I'm trying to get the numbers up for the people I like."

"Well, you're a man." "Yeah; kind of out of my hands, really; I mean, it's – yep, I know." "You're a heterosexual man." "Flamboyantly heterosexual – yes. I drive a truck and eat meat and watch ultimate fighting. Yeah, I know." "Oh, that's not like Jesus!" "Really?" "He was a hippie in a dress." "Oh, I did not know that. When I see him again, I'll talk to him about that. When he comes back on a horse with a sword to declare war – on you – I'll talk about that." I mean, I know – everybody just – here's the deal: you are a freak! Just be cool with that. Just be okay with that, because if you are it just defuses everyone else's power.

They come up, "You're an idiot!" "I know. Oh, I know." "You are out of your mind!" "Thoroughly." "What you believe is nuts!" "Certainly." "We don't respect you!" "Well, now we have something in common." Be okay with it. Be okay with it. Otherwise, your buddies come up to you guys after work, "Hey, we're going to the strip club." "Nope, I love Jesus." "You're a freak!" "Yep, I know." Your girlfriends come up, "Oh, so-and-so" – "Oh, I

don't want to get in the gossip. I don't want to be in the gossip. That's not what Jesus wants me to do. I don't do that, sorry."

See, Paul's looking at his hip, cool, young church – they're all single, getting married, super-fly, playing guitar, you know – they're just like you. And he's looking at them saying, "So who do you want to impress? Do you want everybody to say you are cool, bright, super-fly? Or do you want Jesus to look at you and say, 'You're like me. They hated me too. They thought I was a freak. They're gonna hate you. They're gonna think you're a freak. You need to be okay with that.'" You need to be okay with that.

So here's what I got for you today – here's my sales pitch: all the fools, welcome to Mars Hill. All you fools who think there's one God – welcome. All you fools who think that God became a man – welcome. All you fools that think a virgin had a baby – welcome. All you fools who think that Jesus never sinned – welcome. All you fools who think he died on a cross for your sins – welcome. All you fools who think that the Bible is true, and it's about Jesus – welcome. All you fools who think if you confess your sins to Jesus today, he'll forgive you and be your God – welcome.

All you fools who think that three days after he died, he rose – welcome. All you fools who think that in the end you will stand before Jesus to give an account for your life, and that everything you do right now really does matter. All you fools – welcome. Welcome. All you fools who think if you pray to Jesus today, he sits in Heaven and will hear you and answer your prayer – welcome. All you fools who are gonna come forward and take communion to remember Jesus' body and blood, shed for your sin, as an act of faith, publicly identifying yourself as a fool like Jesus – welcome.

All you fools that are gonna give your tithes and offerings, thinking that giving money to the message of Jesus is not a dumb investment – all you fools, welcome. All you fools who are enduring hardship and not sinning because you do love Jesus, and you seek his approval – welcome. Welcome, all you fools. Welcome to the foolish team. Welcome.

So here's what we're gonna do: all us fools, we're gonna have a fool party today, all right? It's gonna have communion to worship Jesus, tithes and offerings, prayer, singing, celebration for Jesus. "Why?" Well, we're just too dumb to know any better, right? We're just too dumb to know that this is just crazy. We're just too dumb to know that this isn't gonna work. We're just too dumb to think that there's hope for the city. We're just too dumb to think that if we're different than people, that they would be attracted to us and not repulsed by us, because down deep they need the same Jesus we do.

That's what Paul's telling his church. So I ask you today, are you willing to just be a fool – to just join the team? And if you do, you will take away all of the power that people will use to conform you to anything less than the image of Jesus, because you will have accepted the fact that to be like him is to be misunderstood, disliked, and sometimes even despised.

And so, Lord Jesus, I thank you. I thank you that you were willing to be so humble as to become a human being; so humble as to work a regular job; so humble as to be flat broke and homeless. So humble as to suffer and die at the hands of those who were supposed to be your friends; so humble as to rise and forgive us; so humble as to come here to Mars Hill and to be with us. So humble as to hear our prayers and accept our worship; to love our family and friends and neighborhood and city. Jesus, I pray for us as a church, that we wouldn't be one of those churches that got off to a flying start and had a terrible collapse.

That Lord Jesus, none of us would be the emanating point of cancer and sickness, bad doctrine and sinful conduct that would catch like a cancer through the congregation. Jesus, I pray that we would each have a heart for your church – we would have your heart for your church. And Jesus, we pray for our city. We love it, but if we've got to be idiots for the Kingdom, then may we just wear the uniform well. Smile, laugh, love, enjoy, and wait for the day when we see you face to face and hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And so Jesus, we give ourselves to you, and we worship you today, and we embrace the great honor it is to be a fool – a fool for you. Amen.

You've been listening to the Mars Hill Church sermon series "Christians Gone Wild: 1 Corinthians", taught by Pastor Mark Driscoll. If you have any questions or comments –